

we need to make big plans to address these tremendous capital needs. In order to sufficiently fund our country's freight rail infrastructure needs, the Federal Government should create a new significant and dedicated stream of funds for rail projects. Just as we have a Highway Trust Fund and an Aviation Trust Fund, the legislation I introduced last week, H.R. 1617, would create a National Rail Infrastructure Program.

As in all things here in Washington, the big question on everyone's mind is where can we get the funds to support these needs? H.R. 1617 would fund these improvements through various funding streams including a reallocation of the 4.3 cents per gallon diesel-fuel tax that railroads currently pay into the general revenue fund. I believe that putting these funds into a rail infrastructure program that would benefit the public is the only logical thing to do. The total revenue stream in my legislation would amount to about \$3 billion per year.

There are some who may disagree with such a proposal; however, it would be a serious mistake to ignore our country's growing rail infrastructure needs and the gridlock that will result if we fail to expand our freight rail capacity. So let us heed Daniel Burnham's remarks. Let us think big and make some big plans to address the growing national problem facing our rail system. I hope my colleagues will join the 25 bipartisan co-sponsors and me and support H.R. 1617, the National Rail Infrastructure Program.

Remember, this Nation is great because we dare to dream great dreams. Please support this bill because this bill can do what we need to be done for freight movement in this Nation.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. JONES of North Carolina addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO AIRLINE WORKERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, today, finally, 18 months after it was promised, the United States House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly, almost 2 to 1 when finally forced, to provide some financial assistance to the 150,000 airline workers who have lost their jobs as a result of 9/11 and the horrendous recession in the United States. It is expected that as many as another 70,000 will lose their jobs because of the slowdown in travel due to the war in Iraq and even more probably with the threat of SARS and other problems.

It is time that we recognize the service of these people to our country and the fact that they need a little bit of help in their time of need. The Congress rushed through a \$15 billion airline bailout shortly after 9/11 to try to help keep the industry in the air when people were afraid to fly. And that bailout provided more funds in one day than the entire deregulated industry has made in its entire history. Its entire 26-year history was eclipsed, their profits, by that one bill.

But the bill glaringly omitted any assistance directly to workers and it meaninglessly pretended to limit the salaries of CEOs. I have seen the results of the meaningless limits adopted by that legislation 2 years ago, or 18 months ago, in bailing out the airlines with the huge compensation packages and salaries and specially protected retirement that is being made available to the executives. It is defended. They said how could we get execs to work here if we did not pay them these outrageous salaries and if we did not totally protect their retirement? Guess what? All of the line workers, all the flight attendants, all the pilots, all the mechanics, all the gate agents, all the ticket agents, none of those people have specially protected pensions, and yet there has not been support from the industry or from this administration or from the majority in this House of Representatives to help those distressed workers.

And finally today, in one of those opportunities that rarely comes, a week ago when we were taking up the supplemental bill I tried to offer an amendment to help the workers; in fact, a Republican Member had gone earlier to a press conference with me and others to announce the legislation, and I asked him if he would go to the Committee on Rules and ask to have it made in order during the bill, and he said absolutely. Guess what? He did not show up. He did not show up because he was intimidated by the Republican leadership.

I came to the floor and offered that amendment, but the Republicans struck it down on a procedural technicality. They said we cannot take up a bill here to help the workers. We will get to it soon. Just like the 18 months we had promised previously, soon. Soon when?

Today, because we had one opportunity, which was a motion to instruct, usually a technical sort of thing in the House of Representative, we focused in on assistance to workers that has been long overdue; and when forced to vote, we find that nearly two-thirds of the United States House of Representatives supports that, but their leadership and the White House leadership has been preventing us from taking that step.

Congratulations to the House for that vote today and shame on the leadership and shame on the leadership downtown that did not allow that vote, and shame on them if they find some way to try to kill this in the con-

ference committee because the White House is objecting that there is too much money in the bill to help the airlines now that we have added a little bit of money to directly help the workers. We will all be watching to see what comes in that final conference report, and we will know who killed the assistance to workers if it is stripped out of the bill.

After this overwhelming vote here and the overwhelming vote in the Senate, let the majority work its will and let us help these workers and their families.

AUTISM AND VACCINATIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, on a regular basis I come down here and talk about children who are autistic and the reasons for it. We have been receiving letters from across the country from literally hundreds and probably thousands of parents who have autistic children, and they do not know what to do about it, and all of them believe their children were damaged by the mercury that is in vaccines. It has been in children's vaccines for a long, long time.

Children get between 25 and 30 vaccinations before they go to school, and up until just recently almost all of them contained thimerosal which was 50 percent mercury. We all know mercury is toxic to the brain, and yet they had it as a preservative in vaccines. And our children, in my opinion, and scientists and doctors from across the globe and here in the States believe that mercury in the vaccines was one of the major causes.

Here on this easel I have pictures of probably 50 or 60 or 70 kids who were damaged by the mercury in the vaccines, and I have letters that I read every night. We have a system here called the Vaccine Injury Compensation Fund that is supposed to take care of these children if they are damaged by vaccines. It has \$1.8 billion in it. It is supposed to protect the pharmaceutical companies from lawsuits, and yet these parents of these kids have had a very difficult time getting satisfaction and restitution from that fund, and many of them, because there was a 3-year statute of limitations, could not even get in the fund.

The reason I bring this up right now is because we are in the process of working on legislation that would deal with this problem, that would help these kids who missed the opportunity by getting in that 3-year window of opportunity to be put in the program so that their case could be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the special master. These families are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars, they are going bankrupt, selling their homes, borrowing money, doing everything to help their children, and there is nowhere for them to turn. We need to